

Notches on The Stick

We have written of the palmy time for poetry with Coleridge. Fain would we linger amid such scenes, with such memories, but we cannot be detained when other themes invite us. We had hoped to do more than glance at the poet's sojourn in Malta, with Sir John Stoddart; his intercourse with Allston, the American painter-poet and with Tieck, the German poet, at Rome in 1805. He was warned that Buonaparte had issued a warrant for his arrest; when hastening to Leghorn, with a passport furnished to him by the Pope, he put to sea in an American vessel. Having been chased at sea by a French cruiser, the captain in alarm compelled Coleridge to throw all his papers overboard, including all the fruits of his literary labors then in his possession. It would be pleasant also to tarry with him at Grassmere, in the company of Wordsworth; to dwell particularly upon the publication of "The Friend, with other notable but less characteristic incidents of his life. We can allude merely to D. Quincey's sketch of him, when he sought the poet at Bridgewater, where he was, 'for a time being, domesticated with a most amiable and enlightened family, descendants of Chubb, the philosophic writer.' Coleridge had the cuckoo's propensity for taking another bird's nest for his own; but we do not find but he was received and entertained with all due courtesy, reverence; and in the case of the Gillmans, with long continued kindness. De Quincey has not always spoken so courteously of Coleridge; indeed he had great skill in drawing disagreeable portraits of his contemporaries, and, for so wise a man, committed a great deal of that sort of folly,—which, in the end, cost him his friendships. Witness the following paragraphs, among his most graphic:—

"In Bridgewater I noticed a gateway, standing under which was a man corresponding to the description given me of Coleridge, whom I shall presently describe. In height he seemed to be five feet eight inches; in reality he was about an inch and a half taller, though, in the latter part of life, from a lateral curvature in the spine, he shortened gradually from two to three inches. His person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was by a peculiar appearance of haze or dimness which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadily for a moment or more, and it struck me that he neither saw myself, nor any other object in the street. He was in deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at the inn door, and advanced close to him, before he seemed apparently conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice announcing my name first awoke him. He stared, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation, for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no mauve honte in his manner, but simple perplexity and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious."

Thus the "Opium Eater" describes his brother sufferer. We have not spoken in particular, hitherto, of this habit by which this master mind was crippled and handicapped; but Coleridge came as thoroughly as De Quincey under its dominion, and by the magnificent prose of the one, we may understand something of the suffering and bondage of either. Coleridge had contracted the passion for this drug by its use to allay the pains of rheumatism; and insidiously, it had acquired such an ascendancy as to make him helpless and miserable. For medical treatment he, in 1816, put himself into the hands of Mr. Gillman, the surgeon at Highgate; and that the good Dr. "might exercise a salutary restraint upon him," he went to reside under his roof. This was the beginning of a mutual affection, like that between Cowper and the Unwins, and Coleridge was never permitted to depart, but continued as their guest for eighteen years,—or until his death, in 1834. Here, like a battered, storm-worn vessel, that had long drifted hopelessly on many seas, he put into the quiet sheltered port, out of which he ventured no more. Coleridge in that remarkable chapter on the Sage of Highgate, in the "Life of John Stirling," pictures finely the scenes of his closing life: "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the

inanity of life's battle; attracting toward him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. . . . The Gillmans did not encourage much company, or excitement of any sort, round their sage; nevertheless access to him if a youth did reverently wish it was not difficult. He would stroll about the pleasant garden with you, sit in the pleasant rooms of the place,—perhaps take you to his own peculiar room, high up, with a rearward view, which was the chief view of all. A really charming outlook, in fine weather. Close at hand, wide sweep of flowery, leafy gardens, their few houses mostly hidden, the very chimney-pots veiled under blossomy umbrage, flowed gloriously down hill; gloriously issuing in wide-tufted undulating plain-country, rich in all charms of field and town. Waving blooming country of the brightest green; dotted all over with handsome villas, handsome groves, crossed by roads and human traffic, here inaudible or heard only as a musical hum; and behind all swim, under olive tinted haze, the illimitable liminary ocean of London, with its domes and steeples definite in the sun, big St. Paul's and the many memories attached to it hanging high over all. Nowhere, of its kind, could you see a grander prospect on a bright summer day, with the set of the air going southward,—southward, and so draping with the city smoke, not you, but the city. Here would Coleridge talk, concerning all conceivable or inconceivable things; and like nothing better than to have an intelligent, or failing that, even a silent and patient, human listener. He distinguished himself to all that ever heard him as at least the most surprising talker extant in this world,—and to some small minority, by no means to all, as the most excellent."

Ah, noble exercise!—from the time when the chairs of Jonson, and of Dryden were hovered about by the wits of their time; till that of this more marvellous discusser, around whom Sterling, Maurice, Carlyle and others of that brilliant host, gathered, as to their master! How pitiful that there was no Boswell and that all remaining to us should be the fragments of "Table Talk,"—those dislocated fragments, mere meteorites of the vanished world of his thought. Most marvellous must have been that discourse, in which, even the perversity of Carlyle allows there were 'glorious islets' rising 'out of the haze,' . . . balmy sunny islets, in that ocean of monologue, with its 'inextricable currents and regurgitations. These were passages when all would hang breathless upon the eloquent words. . . . eloquent artistically expressive words you always had; piercing radiances of a most subtle insight came at intervals; tones of pious sympathy recognizable as pious, were never wanting long.' And yet, it was a fatal facility of speech Coleridge had. We could wish that the fountain of his wonderful thought had been choked at its vocal utterance,—that he had stuttered, like Lamb,—so all that value might not have been squandered into evanescence. If he had only systematized and condensed, and had loved the pen, as he did musing discourse, what might we not have had,—with such ambitious plans and such glorious ideas!

We feel that Carlyle has not done justice to Coleridge; but it is too much to expect that this busy Scotch worker, with his concrete mind, and contempt for human weakness, should approach this dreamer of dreams, an indolent man of infirm will, and mild dissipation,—as he regarded him.—Yet we now know that Carlyle needs not less of human charity than did the man he satirized without prejudice.

Among fall books announced by Houghton Mifflin & Co., are the collected poems of Edmund Clarence S. Edman, written during the past twenty years. This cannot fail to be a welcome as well as substantial addition to American literature. The Emerson-

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Sterling Lester," will also attract the attention of the lover of choice books, reviving as they do, the memory of two pure minded and nobly gifted men. The Biography of Tennyson, by his son, and the Letters of Mrs. Browning, are also notable books.

Hall Caine's recent masterpiece, "The Christian," is "waking snakes," especially in England. Caine has, to use a figure of Holmes, turned over a stone with his foot, and all the wriggling things that love earth and darkness, are greatly disturbed. It is a pity that he has not made his book more complete by giving us a correct picture of what a real Christian really is, or ought to be. A review of the book by Mr. William B. Chisholm, in the N. Y. Home Journal, drew from Caine the following response:

Greeba Castle, Isle of Man, Oct. 7.

My Dear Sir,—Thank you heartily for the article in the home Journal. It cannot be my personal gratification alone which makes me think it good. At a moment when I am suffering from a good deal of misinterpretation—both unconscious and wilful—it is pleasant to meet with such excellent appreciation. With kind regards,

HALL CAINE.

Our friend, Mr. Will B. Tomlinson of the Hillsboro Ohio, News Herald, writes us of a visit to his town recently made by Wallace Bruce: "Well, we had Bruce here,—a glorious fellow. . . . Our great regret was that he could only stay from 4 p. m. until 7 the next morning. This gave us no opportunity to show him the beauties of our cave region. . . . Our people were delighted with his lecture on Robert Burns." Mr. Tomlinson is himself a popular lecturer, and highly skilled with pen and tongue. One has but to look at his countenance to be assured of an open soul full of bonhomie, and many who have heard him discourse on "Freaks, Fools and Facts," assure us what we can well believe, that it abounds in wit and wisdom, and is at once a repertory of humor, of fancy and of eloquence. PASTOR FELIX.

HIS LAST EFFORT.

Elijah was Careless and Fully Realized his Fate.

Mrs. Fidelia Crowell often remarked she did not suppose there was another man in the country so careless as her husband, Elijah. This opinion was shared by the neighbors, who remembered numerous instances of Elijah's carelessness. But there was one occasion when Mr. Crowell proved that he could be as thoughtful as anybody, and Mrs. Crowell greatly enjoyed telling about it.

"We never moved but once," she would begin, "and I may say we have never got really settled, although it's over twenty years ago."

"My sister Elizabeth was a real good hand to pack, and she came over and took right hold. She packed all our clothes and most of the dishes; and it was going on two years before I dared lift up a towel out of a trunk without using both hands, not knowing but Elizabeth might have placed a tea plate in it."

"I had six of Grandmother Crowell's china cups. Of course I set considerable by them, and I packed them myself, just as careful as I could. Elijah saw me, and he noticed I put them into a small box and tied them up and set them on the shelf by the sink."

"When we come to start, I went on the first team; to see that the things were unloaded and set where I wanted them, and I took the box with the china cups with me, and held them all the way to Corinth. Elijah was coming with the second load. We had a real smart young horse at that time, and Elijah was going to drive him over."

"It seems after Elijah got his load all on he stepped into the kitchen and looked about, and right on the kitchen shelf he saw a box done up as careful as could be. Elijah thought it was the china cups, and I suppose he was dreadful pleased to find I had gone off and forgotten them; and he made up his mind that he would show that he could be careful if he set out."

"I know he must have had a dreadful time getting into the wagon with that box in his hands, for that horse never would stand for nobody; but Elijah fetched it somehow, and got started."

"He said the horse went so fast and the wagon shook so that it scared him, for he was afraid those cups would get all smashed up. So he held the box in his lap as careful as he could and being frightened then he made the horse walk every step of the way over twenty miles, and he set on the edge of that seat holding that box as careful as if it was a sick baby."

"When he got here he was as pleased as could be, and says he, 'Now, Fidelia,' says he, 'you can't ever call me careless again. You stepped off and left grandma's cups

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on the sink shelf, and I've brought 'em myself, and walked the horse all the way so's not to jar 'em more than I could help. 'I had unpacked the cups the first thing, and they were set up in the china cupboard; so I just pointed at them, and says I, 'What on earth have you brought, Elijah?' He hurried up to undo the bundle, and if it wasn't my two best flatirons! Yes, Elizabeth had gone to work and wrapped them up, and poor Elijah had been to all that trouble to bring them over. 'Well we had a good laugh at him, but he was considerable riled about it, and I guess it discouraged Elijah, for he hasn't made much of an effort since then, and he don't like to have anybody give him credit for ever trying to be careful.'

HOW THEY STOPPED THE ENGINE.

Oil on the Track Soon Stopped a Runaway Engine.

A representative of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat lately spent some time in drawing out a prominent railway manager, especially about the nicknames which in one way and another became fastened upon the different lines. A certain part of the Erie Railway was long known as the 'Davy Crockett.' How this came about is thus described by the manager aforesaid:

One dark night, when the conductor was taking three passenger-cars through to Sunbury, he noticed the headlight of a locomotive in his rear. He instantly informed the engineer of the fact, and both began speculating what it meant. The train was running at high speed, but the headlight in the rear was gaining steadily on them.

As there were no lights in the rear of the headlight, they concluded it must be an empty engine. The road twists in and out among the mountains and skirts the banks of the Susquehanna River in such a way as to prevent any one looking back to observe what is going on in the rear for a considerable distance.

The conductor ordered the engineer to put on more steam, and the engineer pulled the throttle wide open. Then followed a wild chase. Pursuer and pursued tore along at the highest speed. Everybody on the car believed that the engineer of the pursuing engine was either drunk or crazy.

At last a bright idea struck the engineer. He recalled the fact that a locomotive can make little progress on greasy rails. The contents of two large cans of lard oil were poured on the track from the rear of the last passenger coach. The idea proved a good one. Soon the headlight of the pursuing engine grew dim in the distance. When it was safe to do so, the train stopped and backed up to solve the mystery. A funny sight was revealed.

One of the finest engines on the road called the 'Davy Crockett,'—they gave the locomotives names in those days instead of numbers,—had broken away from a hostler up at Williamsport, and started down the rack on a voyage of destruction. The oil poured on the track had baffled all the destructive abilities that the locomotive possessed. There stood the 'Davy Crockett' puffing, snorting and pawing like a wild Texas steer, the driving wheels buzzing around on the greased track like a fly-wheel in a machine-shop, but hardly moving an inch. Not a sign of an engineer was found, and the fireman of the pursued train mounted the engine and shut her off. They towed her into Sunbury, and there found a despatch ordering them on to a side track out of the way of the runaway; but the oil had saved them.

INSINCERITY PUNISHED.

He Didn't Hear the First Time and It Cost him a Fire.

A Washington correspondent tells of a public man who is a little hard of hearing, and who sometimes attempts to save himself from annoyance by pretending to be more deaf than he is.

In a public place, one day, this man was approached by an office-seeker who, he had reason to believe, was about to bore him with his tale of woe. The office-seeker said, in a low voice, which the others present could not hear:

'Will you please lend me five dollars?'

'What do you say?' asked the public man, in a tone which, he thought, would deter the applicant from repeating his request in the presence of so many; but the man said, in a low voice which drew the attention of everybody within hearing distance:

'Will you lend me ten dollars, please?'

The public man was ashamed to refuse. 'Why, yes,' he said, and gave the man a ten-dollar note.

As the borrower went away, the lender looked after him bitterly and said, with a sigh:

'I'd have saved five dollars if I'd heard him the first time!'

SADLY QUALIFIED.

Her Want of Tact is Overlooked Because of Her Good Work.

There is a certain dressmaker in a New England village who always finds customers in spite of her lack of tact. Such are her drawbacks in social grace of speech, that she innocently offends one patron after another, though she does not lose them. Her ruffles are too even and her biases too far above reproach. This is a specimen of her conversation, the while she 'fits':

'I guess I'll cut this a little mite lower.'

'You've got a real pretty neck!'

Then when the customer unconsciously

bridles with satisfaction, she adds, 'It's your one good point.'

She goes on snipping and pinning.

'There!' she exclaims, standing off to

get an effect, 'that's what I call a lovely

back. Yours is a little bowin', but I make

allowance when I cut.'

The customer begins to feel herself a

monstrousity, but her innocent tormentor

continues:

'Why, I never saw that dimple in your

wrist! How nice that is!'

Hope revived but only to sink again.

'But I guess I want make the sleeves any

shorter for that. You see your hands are

pretty good size, and a fall of lace would

help to cover 'em.'

So the ordeal continues, and the cus-

tomers feels that she has reached the low-

est notch of humility. Only as she is

leaving does she pluck up courage to ask,

'What do you think of red velvet for my

new evening dress?'

Lo! Only I'd get a dark velvet for

a lady your age!'

A Narrow Escape.

Professor Thinkitout—"Oh, my! Great Cats! but I'm having a frightful palpitation of the heart. God forgive my sins. Oh! Just listen to my heart!"

Mrs. Thinkitout—"Why you've put that little alarm clock in your breast pocket. You wanted it set to ring at this hour so you could remember that it is bed time."

No More Fun in It.

Scorchers—I'm not going to ride the wheel any more.

Friend—What's the matter? Come near breaking your neck?

'Lots of times; but that's not it. There's no more fun in it. Pedestrians have learned to be quick and it's impossible now to knock any of them down.'

Turn About.

'Did you enjoy the bear hunt?'

'I enjoyed one part of it very much.'

'What part was that?'

'The part where we hunted the bear.'

Sacrilegious.

'Did they find any irregularities in his accounts?'

'On the contrary, they were remarkably regular—he doctored them every day.'

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